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Art Notes

A DEPARTMENT DEVOTED
TO THE WORK OF THE
NATIONAL ART SOCIETY



Also CONTAINING CURRENT
NEWS OF VALUE TO ART
LOVERS THE WORLD OVER

Conducted by MRS. ANNA L. McNULTY

SOME AMERICAN PAINTERS

MERELY to mention the names of Julian Story, Thomas Eakins, W. Elmer Schofield, Charles Grafty, Mary Cassatt, Violet Oakley and others is to recall the fact that the influence of Philadelphians in the development of art in America to-day is of far-reaching significance. One of the best recent specimens of American portraiture is William M. Chase's portrait of the well known Philadelphia clergyman, the Rev. Dr. Sparhawk Jones, whose daughter is herself among the most promising of the younger American artists. This portrait has been deservedly admired by the connoisseurs. "Behind the brushwork in this head," says Ernest Knauff, "is a knowledge of the 'planes' of the face equal to a surgeon's knowledge of the muscles of the face. It is only after years of practice in the study of painting that the human eye is able to discern all of the many planes in a rugged countenance like this."

The contribution of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to the furtherance and sustenance of art and the artist in America is not less notable. A modern instance is the award of the Temple medal in 1908 to Frank W. Benson (recipient of the Lippincott prize in 1903), and every exhibition at the Academy is an opportunity to see some of the best work of the creative imagination and the craftsman's skill that is achieved in America.

Our greatest portrait painters, incontestably, are John S. Sargent and William M. Chase—consummate technicians, masters of light and shade, and most of all, significant in this—that they bring out the intellectual characteristics of the subject in their live and breathing canvases. John La Farge is the great master of design and composition. In his chancel window in the Church of the Ascension in New York these qualities and his fine understanding of the quieter color values are strikingly in evidence. Among others who tread close upon the heels of Sargent and

Chase in portraiture John W. Alexander is foremost; some of his best work has been sent to the Pennsylvania Academy from time to time for exhibition. Beckwith, Duveneck, Decamp, Glackens, Shannon, Shinn, Smedley, Vinton and Wiles are doing work deserving of more than passing comment in portraiture painting.

Abbott Thayer's work is mainly symbolic, allegorical. He is at his best in commemorative pictures, revealing rare feminine grace and loveliness in types that impersonate spiritual abstractions. Among our landscape painters of distinction are Weir, Childe Hassam and D. W. Tryon. Tryon is very fond of hazy autumnal landscapes; Hassam is an exquisite colorist; Weir is an adept in the suggestion of illimitable distances and depths in the background. We have no one else who is so well acquainted with the "sea changes" as Winston Homer; there is no mood or aspect of salt water that he does not know and represent with a rugged Elizabethan virility and power. In the field of mural decoration there are Abbey, with his wonderful Holy Grail series in the Boston Library (no painter takes his art more soberly and seriously); Elihu Vedder, the mystic; Edwin H. Blashfield, who decorated the Congressional Library; Edward Simmons, Kenyon Cox—a discerning critic—and many more.

* * *

In addition to the refined and delicate art of Mary Cassatt and Cecilia Beaux, to mention the work of Violet Oakley, Rosina Sherwood and Mrs. Dewing is but to make invidious distinctions in view of the many women who are doing work of the foremost artistic excellence. When one considers the work of the modern American painters, one finds therein the emphatic refutation of superficial sciolists who assert that we have no distinguished art or artistic achievement in America.

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THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT

Nothing is so genuinely serviceable as a true friend speaking the plain truth bluntly. That is just the position occupied by Alvan F. Sanborn toward the American Arts and Crafts movement in the current Forum. He puts the necessary pin-prick in puffiness and he denounces financial hypocrisy. Then he proceeds to show the great good of the movement and the gratifying extent of its growth.

He doesn't stint his words either in blame or praise. At the outset, Mr. Sanborn remarks that the movement is "burdened with cant and is guilty of crudities, exaggerations, extravagances, affectations and absurdities which offer incomparable material to the humorist or social satirist. The inevitable result has been that would-be sympathizers have not taken it as seriously as it deserves to be taken. They have been blinded to the reality of the transformation which it has been effecting."

This is plain speaking. He follows it up with more on the material side. He denounces the high prices which the craftsman demands. The aspiring person of moderate means who wishes to break away from the nightmare furnishing of modern houses finds with "the relentlessness of mathematics that only a nabob can furnish his house or adorn his person in accordance with crafts' principles, so he slinks away completely disillusioned, grimly resolving to rub along the rest of his days as best he may with ugly store goods."

Looking at the other side of the picture, Mr. Sanborn finds that the movement has started original industries and rejuvenated a number of desirable American ones; it has replaced tasteless articles in the houses of the rich with those that are artistic; it has helped to make rural life more interesting by giving its ambitious people chances for work and growth; it has elevated America to an honorable rank among the applied-art craft.

Its best work, though this will be combated by the Crafters themselves, will be to stimulate the machine men to make effective reproductions of the beautiful hand-made products in the same way that there are now machine-made reproductions of the beautiful sculptures. These will both educate and delight the masses.

ART IN AMERICA

"American art is distinctive from that of any other country," said Charles Henry Niehaus, the sculptor of the Garfield statue at Cincinnati; those of Allen, Garfield and Mor-

ton in the rotunda of the national capitol; of the statues of Gibbon and Moses in the Library of Congress; of Hahnemann statue of Scott Circle, in Washington; of Hooker and Davenport in the Connecticut State-house; of Drake at Titusville; of Lincoln, Farragut and McKinley at Muskegon, Mich.; of Lincoln at Buffalo; of General Forrest at Memphis; of McKinley at Canton; of Harrison at Indianapolis, and of many other monuments. Mr. Niehaus is the recipient of numerous gold medals, diplomas, and other rewards of merit. He has been in consultation with government officials in regard to the Paul Jones monument, of which he is also to be the sculptor.

"American art," continued the plain man with the kindly face, his gray eyes lighting up with enthusiasm, "compares most favorably with foreign art; yes, in fact, there is more originality, more new ideas and ideals to be found among our own artists. There are a number of foreigners who have a great name abroad, but who would not amount to much over here. Artists, painters or sculptors in Europe are not as industrious as our own. With us, it is an eternal striving and hustle. If one neglects that he will surely fall back every way. Over there, after a man has done one or two good things he thinks he may rest on his laurels.

"Washington within ten years, or probably before then, will be the most beautiful city in America. There is no reason why it should not be. It has the natural surroundings which go to make it a perfect city from an artistic standpoint.

Mr. Niehaus expressed the wish to make President Roosevelt's portrait or his bust, but he was afraid the President could not keep still sufficiently long to insure satisfactory results. "Over sixty measurements of the head must be taken, besides other observations, to insure a good likeness," said the sculptor, "and then the main thing is to catch the impression, the sentiment, or the feeling—you know, the soul of the subject.

TRICKS OF THE PICTURE DEALER

The tricks of the picture dealer?

They are not to be counted. Here is one that was played quite recently. A dealer ordered, from an artist a tavern scene in the old Dutch style signed in the corner with a facsimile of Jan Steen's signature. When the smoky look of age had been given it the dealer eyed it with approval.

"Splendid!" he said to the needy artist. "It's a pity you shouldn't have the credit of

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it. Pray sign it with your own name. It may make you a reputation."

The poor artist, delighted, painted over the signature of Jan Steen and set his own name there. Three weeks later the picture started for New York, consigned to a Fifth avenue merchant of paintings. But by the same boat went an anonymous letter to the custom house officials warning them that an attempt was being made to smuggle in a chef d'oeuvre of the Dutch school worth \$40,000. The picture was seized. Experts were called in. They scraped off the signature of the artist and found underneath that of Jan Steen. The importer had to pay a fine of 50 per cent—that is, \$20,000—and in addition \$8,000 duty. Three days later, however, he sold his Jan Steen (guaranteed by the United States government) for the round sum of \$50,000. Thus he made a fair profit, for the original cost of the picture was \$14—70 francs paid to the poor devil of an artist.

HENRY H. KITSON

With the unveiling of the magnificent monument to the late Mayor Patrick A. Collins of Boston, the name and talent of the distinguished sculptor, Henry H. Kitson is again brought before the public. The monument is in the form of a shaft surmounted by a portrait bust of the mayor; on two sides of the column are symbolic figures. One represents Erin bearing the laurel and resting on a harp, an accurate reproduction of the original instrument. The other is a Columbia resting on a shield. Thus, very appropriately, Mayor Collins' native land and the land of his adoption are symbolically represented. This little monument occupies a place in the Fenway on Commonwealth avenue, Boston.

Mr. Kitson has the distinction of being a member of the Royal Order of Beni Merenti, an honor conferred upon him by the king of Roumania in appreciation of a portrait bust done in marble of "Carmen Sylvia," Queen of Roumania.

The artist is also the possessor of several gold medals, three awarded him by the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association, and one from the American Art Association.

The Paris expositions of 1889 and 1900 have both awarded him medals, as did the Columbian exposition. Mr. Kitson spent several years abroad, where he studied at the Ecoles des Beaux Arts, Paris, and worked under M. Bonnoisseur. At the present time he is journeying in Europe, and the time spent abroad will be divided between France, Italy and England.

MODERN MURAL DECORATION REVIVES INTEREST IN "THE PRINCE OF PAINTERS"

Raphael's portraits alone, had he done nothing else, would justify a great reputation, but they form so relatively small a part of his work that they may almost be neglected in examining his claims to the rank that used to be assigned to him among the world's greatest artists. It is, after all, his unique mastery of composition that is his chief title to fame, and his glory must always be in proportion to the estimation in which that quality is held. It was because composition was to him a comparatively unimportant part of painting that Valasquez thought little of Raphael. It is because, for them, composition, as a distinct element of art, has almost ceased to exist that so many modern painters and critics decry Raphael altogether. The decorators have always known that design is the essence of their art and they have always appreciated the greatest of designers. That is why Paul Baudry, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, idolized Raphael and based his own art upon that of the great Umbrian. To-day, in our own country, mural decoration is again becoming a living art, and the desire for the appropriate decoration of important buildings with monumental works of painting is more widespread, perhaps, than it has been anywhere at any time since the Italian Renaissance. So surely as the interest in decorative painting and the knowledge of its true principles becomes more widely spread, so surely will the name of Raphael begin to shine again with something of its ancient splendor.

But design is something more than the essential quality of mural decoration—it is the common basis of all the arts, the essential thing in art itself. Each of the arts has its qualities proper to it alone, and it may be right to estimate the painter, the sculptor, the architect or the musician according to his eminence in those qualities which are distinctive of his particular art and which separate it most sharply from the other arts. In that sense we are right to call Frans Hals a greater painter than Raphael. But if we estimate a man's artistry by the same standard, whatever the form of art in which it expresses itself, rating him by his power or co-ordinating and composing notes or forms or colors into a harmonious and beautiful unity, then must we place Raphael pretty near where he used to be placed, admitting but a choice few of the very greatest to any equality with him. If we no longer call him "the prince of painters," we must call him one of the greatest artists among those who have practiced the art of painting.